

Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Hearing on “Using
Spectrum to Advance Public Safety, Promote Broadband, Create Jobs, and
Reduce the Deficit”

(Remarks Prepared for Delivery)

As the title of this hearing indicates, spectrum policy can help meet several of our committee’s goals: promoting broadband, advancing the communications needs of public safety officials, creating jobs, and reducing the federal deficit. Today we begin a discussion of ways to maximize our spectrum resources.

One thing we will consider is the spectrum allocated to the federal government and whether those spectrum bands can be better allocated to both the government and commercial sectors. There is already legislation designed to help relocate government users and provide them with better communications resources, to be paid for with auction proceeds from spectrum they clear. And, there may be ways to make that legislation work even better.

There is the 700 MHz D block – ten megahertz of spectrum that Congress specifically allocated for commercial use in the DTV legislation. That legislation also gave public safety a completely separate 24 MHz block of spectrum to create an interoperable broadband network, and an amendment I offered added \$1 billion for the purchase of interoperable equipment. For a number of reasons, the D-block remains unauctioned – and unused – today.

The question now is how best to create the interoperable broadband communications network recommended by the 9/11 Commission. Today, we will discuss auctioning the D-block, as required by current law and as this committee and the FCC favored last Congress on a bipartisan basis, as compared to recent proposals for reallocating the spectrum to public safety. I look forward to that continued discussion.

Today we will also discuss “incentive auctions” as a way to present a win-win-win for existing licensees, potential licensees, and the U.S. Treasury. Such auctions would allow the FCC to share the proceeds from the auction of spectrum that current licensees voluntarily return.

The work we begin today on spectrum issues can help us extend the reach of broadband, meet the needs of public safety, create jobs, reduce the deficit, and allow the economics of the spectrum market to permit innovation to flourish across all spectrum-based services. I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony.

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